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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A unit for preparing leaves of paper material from a continuous strip caused to advance along a predetermined feed path, including:

cutting means, by which the leaves are separated in succession from the strip at a predetermined cutting frequency, comprising a first aspirating conveyor and a second conveyor substantially tangential to the first conveyor;

means, associated with the first conveyor, by which the tension of the advancing strip is varied cyclically and synchronously with the action of the cutting means, capable of cyclical movement generated synchronously with the cutting frequency between two limit positions relative to an the outer, strip-contacting surface of the first conveyor, wherein one of the two limit positions is external to an outer surface of the first conveyor and the other of the two limit positions is internal to the outer surface of the first conveyor.

2. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 1, wherein the first conveyor comprises a first suction roller and an outer surface of the first suction roller is at least a portion of the outer surface of the first conveyor, and the two limit positions of the tension varying means are identifiable as an external position and an internal position, relative to the outer surface of the first suction roller.

3. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 2~~1~~, wherein the tension varying means comprise at least one diverter element revolving about a fixed axis parallel to an axis of the first conveyor.

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4. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 3, wherein the fixed axis about which ~~of the~~ diverter element revolves is positioned ~~occupies a position between~~ the axis of the first suction roller and the outer surface of the first suction ~~selfsame~~ roller.
5. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 4, wherein the outer surface of the first suction roller is afforded by a plurality of cantilevered aspirating sectors arranged around the periphery of a supporting disc and separated one from the next by a uniform angular distance in such a way as to create a gap between each two adjacent sectors.
6. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 5 ~~4~~, wherein the second conveyor comprises a second roller supporting a plurality of substantially radially aligned ~~radial~~ blades equispaced angularly around and projecting from the peripheral surface of the second ~~selfsame~~ roller.
7. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 6 ~~5~~, wherein each aspirating sector presents a relative longitudinal corner edge extending parallel to the rotational axis of the first suction roller and combining with a corresponding blade of the second roller to ~~create a device such as~~ will scissor-cut the continuous strip.
8. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 7 ~~5~~, wherein the tension varying means further comprises ~~comprising~~ a shaft, rotatable about ~~centered on the fixed axis of~~ about which the ~~diverter element revolves~~ revolution, of which the ~~the~~ free end carries a flange located on the side of the first suction roller opposite from the disc carrying the aspirating sectors, wherein

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the flange carries a plurality of diverter elements ~~comprising~~consisting in cylindrical rods disposed parallel to the fixed axis, projecting toward the disc and designed to pass cyclically through the gaps between adjacent sectors during the rotation of the first suction roller, as the shaft rotates about the fixed axis.

9. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim 8, wherein the flange presents a substantially triangular configuration and carries one of the cylindrical ~~rods~~rod at each vertex.

10. (Currently Amended) A unit as in claim ~~9~~21, wherein the shaft carrying the flange is driven in rotation from a shaft carrying the disc of the first suction roller.

Claims 11-20: Cancelled

21. (New) A unit as in claim 5, wherein the tension varying means further comprises a shaft, rotatable about the fixed axis about which the diverter element revolves, of which a free end carries a flange located on a side of the first suction roller opposite from a disc carrying the aspirating sectors, wherein the flange carries a plurality of diverter elements comprising cylindrical rods disposed parallel to the fixed axis, projecting toward the disc and designed to pass cyclically through the gaps between adjacent sectors during the rotation of the first suction roller, as the shaft rotates about the fixed axis.

22. (New) A unit as in claim 21, wherein the flange presents a substantially triangular configuration and carries one cylindrical rod at each vertex.

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23. (New) A unit as in claim 22, wherein the shaft carrying the flange is driven in rotation from a shaft carrying the disc of the first roller.